

# The Moral Libertarian Way to Social Justice

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In an encouraging development, there has been an increased focus on social justice, both economically and socially, in recent years. As a liberal, I see this focus on providing equal opportunity for all as a good thing. However, I do have strong reservations about the approach of some activists, and these reservations have intensified in recent years. As a moral libertarian who believes in the equality of moral agency as the most important morality imperative in politics, things like so-called safe speech, no-platforming, political correctness, progressive stack speaking systems, and the exclusion from movements of people who express opinions the activist establishment label as 'regressive', are clearly not things I can accept. All these represent the activist establishment making cultural and moral decisions that other people are pressured to accept in one way or another, and in many cases also represent a top-down distortion in the free market of ideas.

In fact, I believe that sticking to the principle of equal moral agency is the route towards true social justice for all. After all, social justice is essentially another way of saying equal opportunity for all. Equal moral agency and equal opportunity are essentially the same thing. On the other hand, whenever the principle of equal moral agency is violated, there is not a situation of equal opportunity by definition.

From a moral libertarian perspective, things like no-platforming and the progressive stack are actually against social justice by definition, because they clearly violate the equality of moral agency. This is because, if some people can speak their minds but some cannot, or some people are given a higher priority to speak than others, there is clearly no equality of moral agency. But let's approach this from a more facts-based approach. To improve social justice, we need to know the injustices that are actually happening, and to obtain this knowledge we need to let people speak up about their lived experiences and their grievances. Not allowing some people to speak or placing them last in the queue effectively prevents them from getting the social justice they need. Back in the 1960s, college students started a Free Speech Movement, so they could voice injustices in relations to the Vietnam War and conscription, civil rights and women's rights. In time, these voices changed society forever. If conservatives were able to no-platform these activists, none of that progress would have happened. The New Left back then understood the importance of free speech. It is very regrettable that the current generation of leftists do not share this attitude.

Some leftists believe that they can subjectively classify certain ideas and attitudes as regressive, and censor them out, while not affecting social justice. In reality, this is not only misguided, this is moral hubris. From a moral libertarian theory perspective, this represents the activist establishment making cultural and moral decisions for everyone else, deciding what they can say or think. Therefore, the principle of equal moral agency is clearly violated. But this is not just an issue in theory. In recent years, I have increasingly heard from women, ethnic minorities and LGBT

individuals that have been excluded from so-called progressive movements because of certain beliefs they held or certain things they said. The activist establishment's decision to no-platform ideas they see as regressive actually has the effect of turning away some of the very people they are supposed to help. If we look at it from an intersectional perspective, it gets worse. For example, ethnic minorities, whether black, Latino, Asian or indigenous, are more likely to be religious and hold traditional viewpoints, and this also applies to female and LGBT members of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the radical solutions proposed by the activist establishment often provoke intense backlash in ethnic communities and the developing world, causing ethnic minority women and LGBT individuals to favour more moderate solutions. It is therefore unsurprising that those complaining of exclusion are very often ethnic minorities, the very people intersectional feminism is supposed to help. In fact, if intersectional feminism is practiced this way, it is not real intersectional feminism, but GLIF (gatekeeper limited intersectional feminism).

The liberal alternative is to let the free market of ideas select the best solutions for social justice, and also improve ideas concerning social justice over time. In a truly free market of ideas, solutions that fulfil the previously unmet needs of individuals will survive and thrive. Such solutions are progressive by definition, whether the activist establishment like them or not, because they fulfil a previously unmet need. A good example is same-sex marriage, a solution to a previously unmet need (the commitment and legal protection of same-sex couples) which was subjectively seen by the then-LGBT activist establishment as regressive (because they saw it as assimilation). As same-sex marriage was a progressive idea by definition (since it fulfilled a previously unmet need), it gradually won over more and more support in the free market of ideas, despite the bitter opposition of some establishment activists. On the other hand, ideas that do not offer anything better than what has already been previously offered are, by definition, regressive, just like if a company decided to sell a computer based on 20-year-old hardware and software. In a truly free market of ideas, we do not need to fear such regressive ideas, for they will eventually be eliminated by the market due to a lack of 'buyers'.

The free market of ideas also allows the development of the best solutions that will provide justice for the largest number of people over time. This is because, as differing and sometimes contradictory ideas enter the 'market' and compete against each other, proponents of ideas will have to be receptive to criticism and suggestions from other parties and improve their ideas over time so that they remain competitive. This effectively encourages repeated cycles of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, evolving and refining our ideas over time. Another great feature of the free market of ideas is that it allows minorities within minorities a better opportunity to ensure that any solution for justice also serves them well. Where a minority is seen as a homogenous group and its voice is whitewashed by the activist establishment to sound uniform, the needs of minorities within minorities are usually not well heard or considered. But where there is a genuine free market of ideas, where ideas can flow freely without gatekeepers being able to erect barriers, minorities within minorities can make their case just like everyone else, and the activist establishment will either be forced to change to accommodate their needs, or face being discredited in the free market of ideas.

The free market of ideas, being made up of many minds, each understanding their own part of the human experience, can effectively process a vast amount of information about the injustices that are

occurring out there, and select the best solutions that can improve a wide variety of injustices at the same time. On the other hand, movements controlled by elite activist establishments often focus only on what people in the establishment can see, resulting in solutions that do not serve the people they are supposed to serve. Using an economic analogy, the free market of ideas is like a free market of goods and services, where complicated information about demand, supply and costs is efficiently synthesized into appropriate prices that do not cause a surplus or shortage of goods. On the other hand, the elite activist establishment is sort of like the centrally planned command economies that used to exist, where the plans seldomly met the actual needs of the people, resulting in either a surplus or a shortage of goods.